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SUBJECT: Latvian cabinet authorizes signing of border treaty; still waiting on Moscow

Ref: Riga 100 and previous

¶1. On March 6, the Latvian cabinet granted PM Aigars Kalvitis the authority to sign the border treaty with Russia, pursuant to legislation adopted by the parliament in February (reftel). In its decision, the cabinet made reference to "respecting the OSCE principle of not changing accepted borders" and withdrew the unilateral declaration from 2005 that had scuttled earlier plans to sign the treaty.

¶2. The GOL has communicated to the Russian Federation that it has completed all its internal processes needed before signing (and removed the 2005 roadblock) and looks forward to an early signing, with the possible participation of the two presidents. The Latvian press is reporting that the signing will occur on March 27, although GOL officials stress that no official response has yet been received from Moscow. FM Lavrov has publicly acknowledged that the Latvians have proposed a signing in late-March. The Latvians hope to send an advance team to Moscow the week of March 19 to finalize arrangements for signing. The Russian Embassy in Riga has provided preliminary approval of those dates.

Antweiler